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**Environment Department Offers Free Home Tests for Indoor Radon,
the Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in the U.S.**

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will lead a month-long campaign in January against indoor radon and will provide free radon test kits, while supplies last, for private residential use.

A National Academy of Sciences report in February 1998 confirms that radon is a serious national public health problem as the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. The report concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year, or up to 60 deaths per day.

NMED's "2006 New Mexico Radon Action Month" is focused on highlighting the health impacts of radon and motivating people around the state to protect themselves and their families from its adverse health effects. In a survey conducted during the late 1980s, close to 25 percent of the homes tested in New Mexico exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recommended action level for radon of 4 pico-Curies per liter of air.

"Radon is a serious health problem for many homes in this state, but it doesn't have to be," NMED Secretary Ron Curry said. "With a simple test and some simple remedies, most home radon problems can be fixed with a straightforward solution, so we are urging residents to take action by testing their homes with these free kits."

Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that occurs in most soils and is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor environments, but can be extremely harmful when trapped in buildings. At higher indoor concentrations radon can cause lung cancer after prolonged exposure. Old or new, any home can have a radon problem. The only way to know if a home has a radon problem is to test for it. Testing a home for radon is easy and high radon levels can be fixed at a cost similar to many routine home repairs.

Free radon test kits can be obtained by contacting Michael A. Taylor, NMED Indoor Radon Outreach Coordinator at (505) 827-1093 or via e-mail at Michael.Taylor@state.nm.us. For press inquiries, contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.